I consider myself a relatively new teacher, but have been involved in the classroom since my studies in college and as a substitute teacher and tutor. Since I have left college and gotten into the field, education and teaching has drastically changed. It has been my dream since I was in second grade to be a teacher, and I studied hard to get where I am today. Sadly, the reality of my dream is setting in. It seems as though teachers don't get to teach anymore, and instead spend days testing and collecting data. Students are NOT products. Education is not the corporate business world and should not be treated as such. My students are little human beings who are learning and growing each day at their own developmental level. Just because they don't reach a certain test score or "goal" by the end of the year, does not mean they didn't learn or make progress throughout the year. We can't treat children like products that we need to manufacture, and we certainly can't condemn teachers who don't reach certain test scores. When did testing become the end all and be all of education? Whatever happened to creativity in the classroom and making learning fun? All of that is being taken away with these new Common Core Standards and Teacher Evaluations that only care about numbers, data, and percentages. I didn't go into teaching to fill out paperwork, give tests, and compute numbers. I went into teaching to change children's lives, make learning fun, and open a world of new experiences for them. Why are teachers being treated as the enemy and so many demands put onto them? We are not God, we are simply doing the best we can each day in the classroom. I teach in an inner-city school where students come from broken, poverty-stricken homes, among other issues. They bring that to school with them every day. These are circumstances that directly affect learning, and although I give my all, sometimes those students don't reach these lucrative goals that are set forth by people who have NEVER been in a classroom.

Let's get back to what teaching and education are supposed to be: about the students, fostering creativity, experiences, and the love of learning without rushing through materials and content. We need to move away from constant testing, and putting emphasis on test scores. Although we shouldn't dismiss the need to challenge students and foster higher-level/critical thinking, we shouldn't "overload" students with content. Instead, we should be focusing on essential elements students in each grade need to learn and then delving into those lessons deeply so students get a good understanding of them. Right now, with time constraints, we are just skimming the surface. There is talk of extending the school day/ year and hours in the classroom. In my opinion and experience this is not going to help anything. After a certain point, our minds need a rest. Let us remember when we were in school ourselves. I remember being in class and always loved learning, however there was a point for me too when my mind became tired and simply "shut down." This happens to students too, especially the young elementary aged ones, and I see this first hand in my class every day. We can't burn out and burden these children because then learning is no longer fun and then students don't care. Please make the right decisions and listen to the teachers who are on the frontline and truly care

about their students and profession. We are the ones who know what it is like in the classroom every day, and truly know our students and their needs.

Thank you.

Mrs. Sarai G.